

Honors Scholar Wins First at National Council

Students present research at National Collegiate Honors Council

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English major and Honors scholar Alejandra Castillo presented her research poster on Shakespeare's "Hamlet" in November. She was awarded first prize. (Photo by J.N. Andrews Honors Program)

By: Danni Francis

Honors scholar Alejandra Castillo won first prize in the Fine Arts and Humanities section of the student poster competition at the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), which held its annual conference in November 2015. Fellow honors students Alaryss Bosco and Shanelle Kim

presented alongside Castillo with Beverly Matiko, associate professor of communication and English, accompanying the three while in Chicago. The mission of the NCHC is to support and enhance the community of educational institutions, professionals and students who participate in collegiate honors education around the world.

“I was very happy to hear I won first prize for the Arts and Humanities section and received very constructive feedback from the graders,” said Castillo with a smile. Castillo, Bosco and Kim are all English majors who took the same English seminar and all expressed joy at reuniting to discuss their growing research with other scholars.

Monique Pittman, director of the J.N. Andrews Honors Program and professor of English, serves as academic advisor to both Bosco and Castillo.

“I’ve taken students to NCHC twice now and both times one of our people has won, so I think it’s a real statement of the quality of Andrews and our students,” says Pittman.

“After I completed this paper in December 2014, Dr. Pittman provided amazing feedback and encouraged me to pursue this interest and possibly expand it into my senior honors thesis,” says Castillo. “She has been a crucial individual in the development of this investigation and encouraged me to submit my abstract to the NCHC.”

Castillo’s research project was born out of an English seminar she took from Pittman. Pittman mentored Castillo’s research on Shakespeare’s “Hamlet” and its setting in a Russian film directed by Gregori Kozintsev, drawing on the artistic contribution of composer Dmitri Shostakovich and writer Boris Pasternak.

“My interest in this subject stems from my childhood in Russia and my fascination with its post-imperialist history,” explains Castillo. “My strengths in analyzing this film were also based on my knowledge of the Russian language and my understanding of music theory from my classes as a music minor.”

For the NCHC session the students each made a poster to present their research, drawing from their experience doing the same for the regular Honors program poster sessions.

“We stood in a large hall with many other students, presenting our work to graders and students for around two hours,” recalls Castillo.

“It was a wonderful opportunity and an enriching experience,” says Kim, whose research was on “Hamlet” and the 1964 Russian adaptation. “In my research I focused on the individual struggle to discover truth in both the text and film. This conference really showed me the importance of academic research.” Kim is a senior English major working under Vanessa Corredera, assistant professor of English.

Bosco, a senior English major, titled her research, “A Machiavellian framing of power dynamics in Shakespeare’s Henry V, as adapted through Olivier, Branagh, and the BBC’s Hollow Crown.” It has been in the works for over a year, stemming from a class taught by Pittman.

“It was a great privilege to be able to present my research at NCHC, to be able to discuss it with like-minded colleagues and professors was an awesome and humbling experience,” says Bosco.

For more information on the Honors program visit Andrews.edu/honors, email honors@andrews.edu or call 269-471-3297.

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